UNITED NATIONS

ST

Secretariat

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30 September 1997

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION*

UPGRADING OF SUBSTANTIVE AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

Pursuant to section 4 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1, the Under-Secretary-General for Management promulgates the following rules to implement the programme for upgrading the substantive and technical skills of staff members:

Section 1

Objectives and contents of the programme

1.1 The programme for upgrading substantive and technical skills aims to provide departments and offices throughout the Secretariat with a means to ensure that they can carry out their substantive work and adjust to new mandates and responsibilities by maintaining and developing the skills of their staff within the allocated resources. The programme provides staff with opportunities for professional growth and development.

1.2 Staff development activities that may take place under this programme include specialized training, research, seminars, refresher courses, professional conferences and workshops. Where the skills and knowledge required can best be acquired through hands-on experience, on-the-job training assignments may also be included. Activities may be carried out in-house or externally, under the conditions set out in section 3.

Section 2

Delegation of authority

* Personnel Manual index No. 4480.

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2. Responsibility for managing the resources allocated to each department or office under the provisions of the present instruction is hereby delegated to the heads of departments and offices concerned.

Section 3

Annual training plans

3.1 Preparation. Each department or office shall determine its training needs and set priorities for achieving its strategic goals and developing its human resources. Individual training requirements shall be identified during work-planning and performance management discussions in the context of the performance appraisal system or in individual discussions of training requirements with supervisors, which staff members are encouraged to initiate. On that basis, the department or office shall prepare an annual training plan that aims to provide training opportunities for all categories of staff and to achieve a reasonable gender balance. Departments and offices may wish to consult Staff Development Services, Office of Human Resources Management, or the training service at duty stations away from Headquarters on the formulation of the plan. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with staff as provided for by Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/274 of 28 September 1994.

3.2 Submission, review and approval. Departments and offices shall submit their annual training plans at the end of each calendar year to Staff Development Services for review and approval. All plans shall be reviewed to determine whether they are consistent with the objectives and contents of the programme set out in section 1, and with the guidelines for preparing the plans specified in subsection 3.1. When the various plans reveal common needs, centrally organized training programmes may be proposed to maximize use of resources. Centrally organized programmes are offered in the areas of supervision, management, administration, information technology and language and communications skills. Proposals for external training shall be approved in cases where no equivalent training is available within the Secretariat or other agencies of the common system to which Secretariat staff have access, or where it would not be cost-effective to organize in-house training.

Section 4

Funding and administration of the annual training plan

4.1 After review and approval of the training plans, Staff Development Services shall allocate funds to each department and office at the beginning of each calendar year, keeping in mind the need for an equitable distribution of available resources among all departments and offices as well as their effectiveness in carrying out the previous year's plan. Allocated funds may be used for payment of consultants to deliver in-house training courses and for tuition fees, travel expenses, per diem or academic stipends, as applicable, in the case of external individual training.

4.2 Each department or office shall be responsible for the execution of its training plan. It shall inform its staff of the approved plan and shall be responsible for the administration of the use of the funds allocated, including

the approval of individual training requests, which shall be considered in accordance with section 6.

4.3 If necessary, the department or office may adjust the plan as originally approved, provided the adjustments are within the limits of allocated funds and are reported in the annual report required in section 5.

Section 5

Monitoring and evaluation of the execution of the annual training plan

5.1 Staff Development Services shall monitor the manner in which each annual training plan is executed. For that purpose, each department or office shall submit at the end of each calendar year an expenditure report on the use of the allocated funds and a report setting forth the training undertaken by its staff during the year, together with an assessment of the impact of the training on the work of the department and of the individuals involved. The two reports may be consolidated into one.

5.2 The reports shall be reviewed and evaluated by Staff Development Services. Effectiveness in carrying out the approved annual training plan and making optimal use of the allocated funds shall be a major factor in determining allocation of funds for this programme in subsequent years.

Section 6

Conditions for participation of staff members in the programme

6.1 Eligibility. Staff members at all levels holding a United Nations letter of appointment under the 100 or 200 series of the Staff Rules are eligible to participate in the programme. To be granted financial assistance for external training, there should be an expectation of continued service for at least one year after completion of the proposed training activity.

6.2 Individual requests for training. Individual requests for training shall be submitted, through the immediate supervisor, to the relevant department or office, which is responsible for approval of such requests. Requests consistent with the annual training plan may be approved within the limits of available resources. In the case of requests both for individuals to pursue training outside the Organization and for groups of staff to be trained in-house under this programme, the department or office shall take into account the following factors in deciding whether the request should be approved:

(a) The relationship of the studies to the staff member's functions and development and/or organizational needs;

(b) The suitability of the staff member for the proposed studies;

(c) The quality of the programme and the sponsoring institution;

(d) The possibility that the training will have a multiplier effect (that is, for the beneficiary of the training to impart the knowledge gained to other staff members).

6.3 Leave arrangements. Staff members participating in external training activities may be placed on special leave with or without pay, in accordance with staff rules 105.2 (a) (i) and 205.3 (a) (i). They may also use accrued annual leave for all or part of the period of study. The head of department at Headquarters or the chief of administration at offices away from Headquarters may approve special leave with pay for the purposes of the programme for a period of up to 20 working days or a longer period, in accordance with the applicable delegation of authority. Requests for special leave with pay in excess of the period that may be approved at the department or office level shall be submitted to the Operational Services Division, Office of Human Resources Management.

Section 7

Final provision

7.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on 1 October 1997.

7.2 Administrative instruction ST/AI/281/Rev.1 of 9 April 1990 on the External Studies Programme is hereby superseded and abolished.

(Signed) Joseph E. CONNOR
Under-Secretary-General
for Management